

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. - 16. (Canceled)

17. (Previously Presented) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the developing solution contains an inorganic alkali agent.

18. (Previously Presented) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the developing solution has a pH of 13.0 or less.

19. (Previously Presented) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the developing solution contains a carbonic acid or a carbonate.

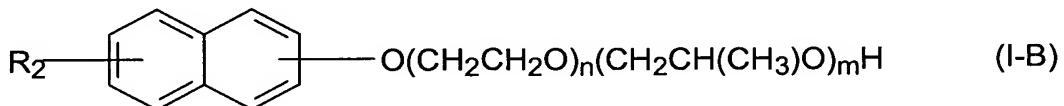
20. (Previously Presented) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the developing solution contains a chelating agent to a divalent metal.

21. (Previously Presented) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the developing solution has an electrical conductance of from 3 to 30 S/cm.

22. (Canceled)

23. (Previously Presented) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the developing solution contains a silicate.

24. (Currently Amended) A developing solution comprising an alkali aqueous solution containing 2 to 10 wt% of at least one nonionic aromatic ether-based activator represented by the following formula (I-B):



wherein R₂ represents H or an alkyl group having from 1 to 100 carbon atoms, n represents an integer of from 5 to 30 and m represents an integer of from 0 to 100 and 0.01 to 0.5 wt.% of a chelating agent wherein the amount of the nonionic aromatic ether-based activator is greater than the amount of surfactant in the developing solution.

25. (Previously Presented) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the developing solution has a pH of from 10.0 to 12.5.

26. (New) The developing solution as claimed in claim 24, wherein the chelating agent is selected from the group consisting of ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid · 4Na salt, citric acid and hydroxyethyl ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid · 3K salt.